

# Public Hearing

## "Youth with Mental Illness Involved in State Juvenile Justice System"

Missoula County Courthouse

May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2007

4:00p.m. – 7:00p.m.

**This invitation is for the general public, youth and individuals with disabilities, families, parents, disability advocacy programs, state entities, anyone interested in gathering information and sharing experiences pertaining to youth with mental illness involved in the state juvenile system.**

According to research cited in Youth and Mental Health Disorders: Issues and Emerging Responses, published in 2000, nationwide, an estimated 20 percent of the young people involved in state juvenile justice systems suffer from severe mental health disorders,. Yet until recently, most juvenile justice systems have paid little attention to the mental health needs of the children and youth with whom they come in contact.

If we are to succeed in preventing and reducing juvenile delinquency, we must address not only the offenses that bring certain youth to the attention of the juvenile justice system but the underlying problems they face, including the mental health problems that affect so many youth purported to be served by the system.

In concentrating on youth exhibiting mental health concerns, we are not discounting the importance or the impact of youth with disabilities in general and their experience with the system. However, it is our collective sense that from a mental health perspective, the prevalence of undiagnosed, misdiagnosed and untreated cases continues to increase and be overlooked.

The focus of this committee is to gather information relative to community-based experiences regarding this population. We are charged with paying particular attention to examining several critical domains as they relate to :

- Best Practices
- Screening and Assessment (Develop, sustain, and standardize instruments)
- Diversion (Access for qualified individuals to criteria-matched diversion programs)
- Treatment (Review a constellation of treatment modalities)
- Parent/Guardian Concerns
- Re-Entry (Examine issues germane to integrating kids back into community settings)
- Staff Competencies/Training (Ensure adequate training in mental health issues for line-personnel and administrative staff)
- Community Education Initiatives (Disseminate information to parents/stakeholder/members of the community at large regarding mental health issues)

It is our intent to accumulate information in these hearings with the end goal of discerning the most effective method of organizing a collaborative system of supports in order to create a formalized policy that we will present to the Governor for legislative action.

*Sponsored by the Governor's Civil Rights Advisory Council  
Thank you for your participation and we welcome your comments and experiences.*